

Strategy - Conduct Education and Awareness Campaigns to Increase Drivers' Awareness of the Risks of Drowsy Distractions

General Description

It is estimated that drivers who were fatigued, fell asleep, fainted or lost consciousness accounted for 3,200 crashes in North Carolina in 2002 with at least 34 deaths. (Latest analysis). One of three ages groups at greatest risk for drowsy driving at young people aged 16-29, especially males. Some studies have shown that the risks of driving drowsy are the same as driving drunk (.089 BAC). A recent survey by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety of U.S. and Canadian police officers found 93% of respondents felt drowsy driving was a serious problem.

This strategy focuses on educating drivers in the primary risk group of ages 16-29, addressing both those just beginning to drive (high school students) and college students, especially freshmen who are likely to participate in long drives with limited sleep. NHTSA data shows males are five times more likely than females to be involved in drowsy-driving crashes. The intent is to educate young males and, females to a lesser extent, about the hidden dangers of driving without proper sleep or rest, the increased danger of having consumed alcohol when driving while tired, and the higher risks of driving between midnight and 6 a.m.

Distracted driving is another message aimed at the same target audience. It is expected that traffic safety educational campaigns will have different messages tailored to the same target audience.

Technical Attributes

Targets	Initial target is males and all teens beginning to driving. Secondary target is college students and young military personnel who may be unaware of the dangers of drowsy driving. The goal is to create awareness so these target groups recognize the need to get proper rest and sleep, especially before driving long distances.
Expected Effectiveness	Measuring the success (or failure) or educational programs aimed at changing driver behavior is difficult. Due to the nature of the problem, any criteria used to evaluate effectiveness will require careful analysis and take years to produce quantitative results. However, using prior crash statistics that identify drowsy driving as a cause and comparing them to similar statistics after an appropriate time-frame (three years minimum) to allow the educational program to take root. Questions can be developed to be included in driving license tests administered by the N.C. Department of Motor Vehicles to measure awareness of the issue by first-time drivers now and awareness by first-time drivers three-years from now.
Keys to Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Reducing traffic by target audience during midnight to 6 a.m. and seeing a drop in the percentage of drowsy driving crashes state-wide.
Potential Difficulties	<ul style="list-style-type: none">This strategy could be expensive.The difficulty in measuring the success of this program in the beginning years may impair the ability to inspire buy in and continuity of effort.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The target audience will properly not be overly receptive. • Relevancy in reaching audience reluctant to listen to adults. • Competition with other traffic safety programs, including distracted driving, that may lead to information overload.
Appropriate Measures and Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine the number of target audiences aware of campaign through a survey. • Number of students attending a presentation (if this is selected as one of the facets). • Future numbers of drowsy-driving related crashes. • Number of visits to informational Web site. • Number of students who have graduated from a driver's improvement education program that includes drowsy driving in the curriculum. • Annual cost of related crashes versus annual cost of campaign.
Associated Needs	None
Organizational, Institutional and Policy issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any successful education campaign needs to involve governmental agencies tasked with reducing traffic crashes, such as the NC Department of Transportation, the Department of Motor Vehicles and the Governor's Highway Safety Program; the NC Department of Education; the Federal Highway Administration; the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration; the State Highway Patrol, military bases and local police departments. High schools and colleges have to believe in the goals to allow access to students for educational purposes. Private organizations active in traffic safety issues, like AAA Carolinas, UNC Hospital Trauma Unit, MADD, all North Carolina colleges, AARP, need to participate in the program. • A host agency should be established to take the lead and coordinate the effort
Issues Affecting Implementation Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scope size - multi-faceted campaigns require much planning and coordination but NC DOT has already begun sketching out the details of an aggressive public education campaign. These tactics can be quickly fleshed out for initial buy-in from organizations to develop more granularity in approach. • One positive is that there are a lot of smaller programs that focus on improving driver behavior. It would be fairly easy to adopt appropriate sections of these programs into our own so the program wouldn't be reinventing the wheel. • Distribution of drowsy driving brochures and educational materials could be bundled with other traffic safety activities, such as giving out drowsy driving brochures as part of the "Booze it and Lose it" and "Click it or Ticket" check point campaigns.
Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rumble strips (which are already being installed under an aggressive program begun by NC DOT) • TV air time • Fliers/Brochures • Person-hours for presentations to high schools and colleges • Person-hours for crafting messages • Personnel costs to hosting agencies • Other marketing costs
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualified individuals to conduct this type of campaign already exist in

organizations named above.

Legislative Needs

- Money for rumble strip construction (high rate of success and cost/benefit could dictate more funding from legislature)
- This effort should seek a legislative champion to help build support within the government for this effort and to help fund any unexpected needs that can show clear cost/benefit results.